From: Joel Landry
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 12/23/01 2:04pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

Speaking as a Canadian who has very little knowledge in interpreting law, I like what I am reading. This is the first step in breaking Microsoft's strangle hold on the computer industry. In the past, everywhere I turned, Microsoft was the "required" normal environment for computers. Now maybe other companies can start giving Microsoft some real competition and/or other software will hopefully work better in Windows.

Although this settlement sounds nice, there is a side of this argument I have not seen though....

When you submit "incidents" to Microsoft for technical help for either MS Windows or Internet Explorer, they are attributed to the same Product Identifier. Now this creates a problem.... Are these 2 software programs not separate? If they are separate, why do they have the same Product Identifier when other Microsoft products are different? Internet Explorer 6 which was just released, still uses the same Product Identifier scheme.

When you purchase Windows, you get a specific number (2 or 3 I think) of "FREE" tech help incidents, which can be used up very easily and quickly. If you used these incident for Windows and then run into problems with Internet explorer, then you are out of luck because the PID is the same. The process to get help is a little irritating and complicated. There are only 4 ways I have found to get immediate help:
1- PAY for it. After the "FREE" incidents, you are supposed to pay. YA right. Pay for Internet Explorer when it's supposed to be free.
2- Find what you are looking for in the Knowledge Base. If you are lucky, when you consider most people are not very computer tech literate.
3- Pray for one of those (Usually) irritating POPUP Window Surveys. Maybe they will reply.
4- There is an e-mail link at the bottom of the WEBRESPONSE area on the Microsoft web site. This link is "hidden" at the bottom of the page and is not evident. It doesn't even look like an e-mail link.

All that being said.... I have been managing to get tech support from Microsoft for Internet Explorer without paying for it.

The question now remains.....
Why do 2 apparently separate software packages have the same Product ID? Is this some way for Microsoft to keep everything together even when they say they are not?